

VILA RECÔNCAVO

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ers to keep households of stable families, even without formal marriage. In Class D are found mostly the washerwomen and ironers listed under Occupation Group 2 in the preceding chapter.

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The unwed mother seldom marries, for few men are willing to take a wife who is not a virgin, and fewer still can accept the responsibility of a whole family at once unless the woman has some property to offer along with herself. Once she has had a child a woman loses prestige and status and becomes a mark for men who are looking for an affair. She may even move in with a man for a while. Later, either she leaves him or he leaves her. She must support herself and her offspring, for her father can seldom support another family. As her children grow up, especially the daughters, she hopes for a legal marriage for them; but this is seldom realized for the girls will escape her control just as she herself did. In such a case a woman has little influence and very often cannot force the man to marry her daughter, so that her household is eventually composed of three generations, with two unwed mothers and their children. This is especially true when the young daughters are pretty or, as often happens, light-skinned, as a result of the fact that their fathers often belong to the lighter-colored group of men in town. Often girls from Class D are sent to the city to work as domestics in much the same way as girls from the rural area; there they may marry and avoid a repetition of the cycle, or else they return to their mothers pregnant and unmarried, for few employers will keep a pregnant girl in the house.

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The following data were collected through the use of a questionnaire given after the author had been in the field about nine months. The actual collection was accomplished by the author and two paid assistants. The questionnaire was long and detailed, and each one took approximately three hours to complete.

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Many people in all the classes did not want to respond, feeling that it was too much an invasion of their privacy. Many said that they did not know how much money they earned over a long period, that they simply spent whatever came into their hands. Others produced written, detailed records of all the money they earned and spent and how they spent it. The total number of samples finally collected was 125. Sixty-two are urban samples from the town of Vila Recôncavo, and sixty-

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[Class D Families]

no child was born of the affair she went to Salvador where she found employment. There she met Vavá, whom she liked very much. She went to live with him for eleven years and had three children.

During this time, Vavá had affairs with several other women and had two other children. Finally he tired of Maria José and told her to go home to her mother, which she did, taking her three children with her. Damiana's godfather allowed her, Maria José and her children, and Tatá, another of Damiana's daughters who by then had six illegitimate children, to live rent-free in a house he owned. Childless, he took one daughter from each of the two girls to bring up in his own home.

Shortly after the three women had set up this household, Vavá tired of his new companion and wanted Maria José to come back to him, which she refused to do. From time to time he also asked her for money, as he was now unemployed. She always gave him some, since she was employed, explaining that it was not for him but for his two other children, for she could not think of their going hungry.

In almost every case of break-up of the unmarried state, the children remain with the mother. This is also true in the case of an affair which results in a child. The father never takes on the responsibility of the children. In addition to this, as stated earlier, the children bear the mother's name and not that of the father. Often a break-up occurs because the man goes to live with another woman who does not want the children of his previous union, as she may have some of her own either by him or by someone else. On the other hand, women in Vila Recôncavo say that they would be ashamed to let the children go and be brought up by another woman, except in the case of a godparent, in whose home the treatment is expected to be at least as good as that which the mother could have given the child.

Sometimes women in this class have affairs with men who are already married and who do not leave their wives and children. A woman seldom has more than one lover at one time, and usually stays with the same man for a long period. Although the man takes no responsibility for the resulting children, he may, nevertheless, try to help the woman sometimes; but his first allegiance is to his own wife and children.

Unless there has been a formal marriage, the children are always considered as belonging to the mother, and the most

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BLACK AND WHITE AT BAHIA

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took over at least three cultural elements whose presence in the mores of colonial Brazil may be significant for our problem: the practice of concubinage, the subordinate position of woman in the household, and the comparative absence of color consciousness.

It may be that the Portuguese, like the Moors and other Mohammedans, were, as several commentators have said, a "color-blind" people; that is, awareness of color and other racial differences was not so pronounced with them as with us. It is probably true that the *conceptions* laid down in the culture materially influence the *perceptions* which individuals have.

Perhaps one reason the Portuguese in the New Country and their descendants cohabited with individuals from other races and interbred so extensively was that such behavior had long been common in the Old Country, where their ancestors had taken over from the Moors oriental customs tolerant of plural marriage. Even when Orientals exclude the children of concubines from the legitimate family in an attempt to preserve its status, emphasis is upon preserving status rather than purity of race.

Concubinage, or *mancebia*, as it is known in Bahia, seems to have been quite common throughout the history of Brazil. It appears always to have been more or less socially sanctioned and accepted into the mores. Divorce is illegal, and many marriages are made for family convenience. It is not rare today in Bahia for a man with a legal wife and family to keep in separate establishments one or more *amantes*.⁵ The

⁵ In one reported instance there are five; in another, eight. Usually the man, owing to the expense involved, is well to do; the women are from the lower strata. For instance, a wealthy and prominent intellectual figure lives most of the time apart from his legal wife with a mulatto woman who is intelligent, "attractive," and has traveled (with him) in France, Belgium,

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NEGROES IN BRAZIL

[851] custom is to some extent recognized in law.⁶ Usually the
 [848] children take the mother's name, but occasionally the father
 "recognizes" and registers them, so that they legally bear
 his name. They are sometimes taken into the legitimate
 household, where they are usually accepted without serious
 question by the legal wife.⁷

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 [565] Particularly among the lower classes, illegitimacy is not
 [554] seriously prejudicial to the child. Personal qualities and in-
 dividual ability largely determine his role and status; his
 parentage is rather naturally considered to be a matter be-
 yond his control. A surname is not of great importance, the
 551 given name being infinitely more used, even among the up-
 per classes. Prominent intellectual and political figures are
 000 known throughout the city by their given names. A stranger

[837] and Portugal. Their eldest daughter is studying to be a pianist. There
 are three younger children. The man also supports another mulatto woman,
 said to be "very young and very pretty."

[837] ⁶ A single extra-marital amorous experience makes a woman liable to prose-
 [671] cution for adultery, whereas for a man such conduct must not only be proved
 to be habitual but also to have involved an established relationship with a
 single individual. For a wife to have cause for legal action, she must previ-
 ously have been ignorant of the extra-legal affair of her husband. Otherwise,
 her implied acquiescence constitutes participation in guilt.

⁷ One wife said of her husband's "natural" child, "He's a fine boy. I like
 him as much as, or more than, my own children." In 1911 an American
 consul at Pará wrote: "In Amazonia the father assumes all the responsibility
 and legally adopts his illegitimate children who, in a majority of cases,
 become a part of his own family, taking an equal place in social privileges with
 those children within the bounds of the church regulations. . . . There is no
 disposition in the higher social circles to discriminate against the number of
 these illegitimate aristocrats who, in the matter of education, refinement and
 address, are often the superior of some of those born in wedlock in the same
 families . . . [and are], in many prominent cases, the acknowledged leaders
 of society" (J. Orton Kerbey, *An American Consul in Amazonia* [New York,
 1911], p. 119).

BLACK AND WHITE AT BAHIA

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A stranger is often surprised to discover individuals whom he had not previously thought of as related turning out to be brothers or other close relatives.

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The gradually improving status of women is today working against *mancebia*, and many of the "more scrupulous" families discourage it. In these, the wife, if she knows of her husband's affairs, may reprove him, as also may other members of the family and its friends. But usually, as an upper-class woman said, "the ladies talk very little about it, and then only with their most intimate friends. The subject is not generally discussed."

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Although in recent years at least two feminists have become quite prominent, and one of these has been elected to the state legislature, the common family pattern at Bahia is still patriarchal. Tempered, of course, by the natural claims which primary relations always tend to set up, the role of the husband and father has, throughout Bahian history, been a decidedly dominant role. For instance, it is said to have formerly been the custom—at Bahia today in some instances a custom still observed—for the husband to select and purchase the materials for his wife's clothing and even indicate the manner in which the goods should be made up. Formerly, women, other than prostitutes, servants, and other individuals of inferior status, were rarely seen upon the streets or in public places, the home being considered their proper sphere. Even in the home, women seem to have rarely appeared in the presence of strangers. Tollenare, visiting Pernambuco in the early nineteenth century, wrote, "At my arrival [in the house of a merchant], the women disappeared, and only the head of the house remained in the *salão* to talk to me." In another connection he remarked: "During eight months of residence in Pernambuco I never once saw the

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